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ABSTRACT

In the first issue of the newsletter, the editor indicates that one of the functions of the newsletter is to be an experimental attempt to mirror the ups and downs of the English language in today's world. This issue includes articles on the role of English in Latin America, Hungary, Indonesia, Denmark, and Cameroon. Other articles deal with the role of the British Broadcasting Corporation, the British Council, and amateur radio in spreading the use of English, and with the potential danger of the fragmentation of English through wide dissemination. (VM)

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ENGLISH AROUND THE WORLD

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ENGLISH IN LATIN AMERICA

The E-SU–USA recently completed a survey of the status of English in 19 Latin American republics (Cuba, which will be the subject of a special study in a later issue of this newsletter, was omitted). Obviously it would be impossible to offer our readers in full 19 separate replies – some of them quite detailed – but we shall try to summarize the major points which emerge.

1) By almost unanimous consent, English appears throughout Latin America as the major language next to the tongue of the country concerned. This is stated most flatly in a comment from Brazil: "There is already so much interest in the English language that it virtually occupies the role of a second language" (ranking first after Portuguese, that is to say). From a purely literal standpoint, the position of English as a second language generally in Latin America might, of course, be challenged, for, as our informant in Bolivia reminds us "Spanish itself is a second language to most Bolivians, as speakers of Aymará and Quechua constitute the majority." Analogous situations prevail admittedly in various other areas of Latin America, yet that does not affect the status of English in the educated segments of the population and, as our Bolivian friend goes on to add: "When compared with other foreign languages, English is probably taught twice as much in Bolivia as all the others together." Haiti is a special case, to be sure, and if one accepts Haitian Creole and the official French as two separate tongues, English would be relegated to a third positon. Even here, we are told from Port-au-Prince, "English has steadily gained strength as Haiti's traditional ties with France have weakened, to be replaced with ever firmer commercial, cultural, and migratory links with the United States. Like English, Spanish is a required subject in Haitian schools, but is not accorded the same amount of instruction time."

2) More important perhaps than the present status of English is the fact that interest in, and practice of, the language is rapidly growing throughout the region. This is attested to in virtually every letter received. To quote, for example, a report from Colombia: "During the past two years the demand for English has definitely increased. Bilingual secretaries are at a real premium. Technical publications and news magazines in English are increasing in popularity and use each year." And there is this from Chile: "1969 shows a 20% increase in students at the binational centers compared with 1968 figures" (for a word on the binational centers, see the following paragraph). Occasionally a warning is sounded

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EDITORIAL FOREWORD

The present newsletter represents an experimental attempt by the E-SU of the United States to mirror the ups and downs of the English language in today's world.

While we have no wish to displace any existing tongue, we are eager to explore the possibility of establishing English on all possible levels as a second language for the world (or as an auxiliary language in the case of countries where two or more languages other than English are already entrenched).

This first issue of our newsletter begins with a section devoted to Latin America. This is followed by reports from countries as far apart geographically and in character as Indonesia, Hungary, Cameroon, and Denmark, in order to give the reader some idea of what we propose to do. It is our hope, in the course of succeeding issues, to cover as much of the globe as space and time will permit. Elsewhere in this newsletter will be found brief articles of a more general nature, concerned in part with agencies active in promoting the use of English in non-English-speaking lands.

Though we have relied on sources which we consider highly authoritative, we realize that they have no monopoly on information or wisdom, and we should welcome letters to the editor, either voicing opinions, or contributing items of interest.–J. I. B. McC.

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Language laboratory – Centro Colombo Americano (binational center, Cali, Colombia)

Conversation club – Instituto Benjamin Franklin de Veracruz (binational center, Veracruz, Mexico)

from our correspondents against permitting the enthusiasm for English to reach a point where teaching facilities are totally unable to cope with the demand.

3) The great majority of letters received from Latin America emphasize, in one form or another, valuable work being done by the binational centers, or BNC's. These are, according to one who has labored closely with them, "indigenous, autonomous, non-political institutions governed by a binational board of directors, whose purpose is to promote understanding and cultural exchange between the United States and the host countries." The largest single activity of these centers – which operate with warm encouragement from the USIS (United States Information Service) – is English teaching. Though the greatest concentration of the BNC's is in Latin America, they can be found in many other places, in the cities of Barcelona and Naples, for example, in Iran, Turkey, etc. (The British, it should be remarked in the same breath, sponsor roughly similar institutions, which perform equally useful functions. An article dealing specifically with the British Council is published at a later point in this newsletter.) The number of students enrolled in some of the Latin American BNC's is remarkable: an informant in the relatively small republic of Ecuador reports 8,000 in that country, and the Centro El Salvador – Estados Unidos in the city of San Salvador has had, we are told, "an average of 1,000 students of English at a given time in recent years." The demand is frequently greater than the supply. A letter from Montevideo, Uruguay, notes that "the binational center here offers a two-year course to train English teachers. This year (1969) there were 25 openings, yet 115 persons applied for admission."

4) Apart from the binational centers, and institutions of like character, the level of English language teaching leaves, in many cases, much to be desired. To quote once more from Brazil: "The standards of teaching vary from very good to very bad." Apparently, to judge from reports received, this is one field in which much work lies ahead, namely in attracting more native speakers of English to Latin American schools and universities as teachers, or in instructing more Latin Americans themselves in modern language teaching techniques. To cite our informant in Bogotá: "The knowledge of English in Colombia can probably best be improved and generalized by increased attention to the preparation of teachers." And a letter from Costa Rica more or less sums it up: "The USIS, in sponsoring seminars for English teachers in the Centro Cultural and the Ministry of Education, is contributing to the needed improvement, but there is much, much more to be done."

IS FRAGMENTATION A DANGER?

One of our informants, in remarking on the quality of English spoken in his area, refers to a tendency to "pigeonize" – to mix in "pigeon English" with the conventional variety. It would be invidious to mention the country referred to by name, (it is not one of those mentioned in the present newsletter) and as a matter of fact the same observation would apply to not a few countries. This brings us head on into a problem with which many historically-minded proponents of English as a second language are concerned – namely, the danger that English, by the very fact of its world wide dissemination, might eventually become fragmented, as have other prestigious tongues of the past, notably Latin.

The editors see no harm–and indeed some merit–in a broad span of local differences *provided that these local variants remain mutually intelligible and easily intelligible*. The danger point is reached when the English spoken in Area A is no longer readily understood in Area B and vice versa. Fortunately English has an ally denied to its predecessors–the enormous effectiveness of modern technology in the shape of radio, television, and the like, with their unifying force. By and large the masters of these media are conscious of their responsibility, as the following paragraphs will perhaps indicate.

SLIM JOHN RIDES THE AIR WAVES

BBC—the British Broadcasting Corporation—is the granddaddy of organizations concerned with bringing the English language into non-English-speaking homes. "Since 1943 a service of half a dozen radio transmissions to Europe has grown to an output of some 230 quarter-hour transmissions a week, a high proportion of which are lessons explained in 29 languages," reports BBC. As a recent development, BBC cites courses specifically tailored for the Indian sub-continent and for French-speaking Africa.

As for television, many foreign viewers are familiar with the series "Walter and Connie," which combines teaching and entertainment. In September of this year (1969) a new series was inaugurated, entitled "Slim John." BBC considers this a "new near-beginners course." Unlike "Walter and Connie" or "Walter and Connie Reporting," this is in serial rather than episode form, and falls into the field of science fiction, dealing with an attempted take-over of the world by robots from Outer Space. Their plans are frustrated by Slim John, an escaped robot. To teach himself English Slim John uses a wallet-like "videograph," with a screen on which captions and animated pictures can appear, while sound also comes from it.

In large measure, "Slim John" is the brain child of Christopher Dilke, BBC's Head of English by Radio and Television. Mr. Dilke compares the robot's "videograph" to a "blackboard on which teaching points can be quickly and efficiently explained."

It might be added that a demonstration of the making of this particular television course was given by Mr. Dilke at last summer's "English Language Summer School," held at Westfield College in London and comprising British teachers, foreign teachers of English, and foreign students. The school was jointly sponsored by the English-Speaking Union of the Commonwealth, BBC's English by Radio and Television and London's International House, with E-SU-Commonwealth taking responsibility, among other things, for administrative chores.

Slim John and his Videograph ©BBC

THE BRITISH COUNCIL AT WORK—ONE RECENT EXAMPLE

In over 70 countries spanning the five continents the name of the British Council has long been synonymous with English teaching and teacher training. Although financed almost entirely from public funds, the Council retains a considerable degree of independence from government control. Broadly speaking—and subject always to the wishes of the areas concerned—the British Government decides in what countries and on what scale the Council will work, and then the Council decides what work it will do.

A recent example which has challenged and intrigued many prominent personalities in the Council is that of the south-central African republic of Zambia, the former British protectorate of Northern Rhodesia, which attained its independence in October 1964.

More than 40 tribal languages and dialects are spoken among the four million inhabitants of Zambia. Initially the government decided to take four of the vernacular languages, Chibemba, Chinyanja, Chitanga and Silozi, and to give them the status of official teaching vernaculars. Instruction at the primary level would take place in one or another of these, depending on the geographical area. English was to be taught as a subject, gradually increasing towards the end of the primary phase in preparation for English-medium secondary schooling.

In 1965, a British Council officer, later to become the first Director of a newly-established National Primary Centre, who was working in Zambia under the Aid to Commonwealth English scheme, reported that the existing policy was causing considerable hardship to the children and possibly hampering the full realization of Zambian educational potential. The reasons were mainly practical. The movement of population, particularly from country to town, was straining the concept of regional teaching vernaculars almost to the breaking point. A chance sampling of 25 Grade I teachers in Lusaka, the Zambian capital, showed that only two were speakers of Chinyanja, the official medium of instruction in their own classroom, and a later survey of 42 Grade I classes, also in Lusaka, established that only 49% of the children spoke Chinyanja as a mother tongue. Moreover, an earlier assumption that the official teaching vernacular would soon be picked up—not entirely unreasonable in view of the similarities of all the languages within the Bantu group—was proving less justified than had been hoped.

Thus in 1965, the Zambian government decided to adopt English as the medium of instruction in the primary schools. A second British Council specialist officer was appointed to the National Primary Centre which – with its original staff of five – became in many ways the focal point for the implementation of the new policy. An extensive program of textbook writing and material development, of training and retraining of teachers, supervisors,

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ENGLISH IN THE FIELD OF AMATEUR RADIO

Though it is generally known by now that English has attained a dominant position in international aviation to the extent that pilot-to-control tower communications at the large international airports are almost without exception conducted in English regardless of the nationalities involved, it is not so well known that English has virtually conquered the somewhat specialized field of international amateur ("ham") radio.

At the present time there are some 430,000 licensed radio amateurs in the world, of whom 285,000 are in the United States. For these figures we are indebted to Geoffrey V. Azoy, a Director of the Monmouth County (New Jersey) Branch of E-SU and a former vice-president of the Chemical Bank, who has been a radio "ham," he estimates, for at least 55 years. On a recent day, during a three hour period, Mr. Azoy talked with amateurs in 19 different places—including Australia, Tasmania, Easter Island, Ethiopia, Tanzania, and practically all the countries of Western Europe. "From the standpoint of the English-Speaking Union," Mr. Azoy comments, "the big thing is that 95% of all these thousands of conversations (both by voice and telegraph code) are carried on in English, which has become the accepted universal language of international radio. (Occasionally one hears some Latin American amateurs talking to each other in Spanish, and once or twice I have heard some German, but this is *very rare* indeed.) Probably the most exciting thing is that English is the language employed between all the non-English speaking countries; one hears Russians talking to Italians, and French talking to Greeks, etc.—all jabbering away in what sometimes is pretty rudimentary English, though it seems to get the job done."

Mr. Azoy's own official call signal, in case you are interested, is K2GTZ (pronounced as Kilo 2, Germany, Tango, Zulu).

REPORT FROM INDONESIA

A particularly interesting report has been received by the E-SU from INDONESIA, which was, of course, until after the conclusion of World War II, administered by the Netherlands and where the language of administration was Dutch. Unfortunately we lack the space to reproduce this study *in toto*, but will give what we consider the salient points.

The report starts out by noting that "English is now, by Ministry of Education decree, the official second language of Indonesia, compulsory for all students of junior and senior high school." It then goes on to list some of the agencies which are helping Indonesia in its English-language program, and to comment on some of the difficulties which lie ahead. We quote:

"Most of the English speaking countries associated with Indonesia are doing something in support of English teaching. Countries of the Colombo Plan support scholarships to Australia, New Zealand, Canada and the United Kingdom. Australia and New Zealand have sent volunteers to work with Indonesian institutions. The British Council has reopened and is now working specifically in the field of English teacher training.

"In June of this year (1969) the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Council sponsored a seminar on English teaching for countries of the SEAMEC organization. The United States and countries of the Colombo Plan support the Regional English Language Center in Singapore, a recently formed organization to which Indonesians are sent for teacher training.

"The United States government promotes improvement of English teaching in a number of ways. USIS (United States Information Service) supports two binational centers which teach English to over 4,000 Indonesian teachers and government officials.

"The Ford Foundation is active in the English teaching field with four projects in conjunction with the Ministry of Education or specific universities including a textbook writing project for junior and senior high school English classes.

"Although teacher training institutions are scattered throughout Indonesia, they do not train sufficient teachers to meet the needs of a nation of 115,000,000. Many students finishing their training are not willing to teach in remote areas away from the attractions of the larger cities. Compulsory English is, therefore, unrealistic but still part of the Indonesian curriculum. There are too few textbooks (a situation hopefully alleviated when the Ford project is completed), no audio-visual aids, and too few teachers trained in modern techniques of English teaching. Up to 1965-1966 the anti-west polemics of Sukarno militated against English. Now that there has been a change in politics, Indonesians show an avid desire to catch up with the rest of the world and they recognize English as one tool to help them get the information they need. The demand for learning English is overwhelming."

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and teacher trainers has been in progress ever since the original decision was taken. "Clearly," as one official of the Council recently wrote to your editor, "the changeover to the English medium cannot be brought about overnight, yet the pace of the program which the government has set is a clear indication of the importance and the urgency with which they view the problem. No amount of opposition and hostility to Britain in the political sphere blinds them to the important role, which English has to play as a cohesive and progressive force in the new society or to the necessity of assistance from specialists in making this a reality."

ENGLISH IN HUNGARY, YESTERDAY AND TODAY

(The following is a brief résumé of an extensive study prepared in the summer of 1969 especially for the English-Speaking Union, U.S.A. by the American Hungarian Studies Foundation, August J. Molnar, President.)

Among the foreign languages which have played an important role in the life of Hungary during the last few centuries these should be mentioned: Latin, German, French, and English. Until 1844 in fact, Latin was used on the governmental level both in speech and written communications. Not until that year did the Hungarian language itself become the *official* tongue of the country, without restrictions imposed by Vienna. From the sixteenth century on, of course, German has been a dominant foreign tongue, inasmuch as the King of Hungary was of the House of Habsburg.

As far as English is concerned, the first text in that language appeared in Hungary in 1614, and in 1664 the first English grammar was published. In general it might be said that English influence, and subsequently American influence, has been notable in every phase of Hungarian life ever since the seventeenth century.

In 1777 Pest University, known today as Loránd Eötvös University, began teaching English history and in 1806 a course in the English language itself was introduced. (A chair in English was created there in 1965.) Following World War I an English Department was established at Debrecen University which now bears the name of Lajos Kossuth University. [Debrecen, with approximately 100,000 population, is the chief city of Eastern Hungary and has been regarded as the cultural center of Hungarian Protestantism – Ed.] By the Education Act of 1924 English language and literature were introduced into the curriculum of some thirty gymnasia, especially in the Protestant schools, which made English a required language in the upper grades.

The events which followed World War II brought some drastic changes. Russian was now given a paramount position in elementary and secondary schools, while German lost its ranking place among foreign languages taught in Hungary. English continued, however, to be an important elective subject.

After October-November 1956, when one of the demands of the Hungarian students was the elimination of compulsory Russian, the situation was again altered somewhat. Russian remained a required foreign language, but now science students were also obliged to elect a second foreign language. In the general schools and in other gymnasia greater opportunities were provided to study Western foreign languages in addition to Russian.

At present, Russian is a required foreign language in all general schools, including the special language school, from the fifth grade through the eighth grades. Three hours of Russian are taught a week.

Upon completing eight years of general or elementary education at age 14, the student may go on to any type of secondary school: technical, specialized or gymnasium. Up to 1963 two types of gymnasia existed in Hungary, one for the humanities and one for the sciences. Today there is a "unified" gymnasium under a new system introduced in 1963-64. It remains a four year curriculum with a final examination *(matura)*.

Russian is a required subject for four years, three hours a week, in all secondary schools. In the non-special schools students learn two foreign languages: Russian and another elective language. English is the most popular choice, followed by German, French, Italian and Spanish. Each language is offered for three hours a week during the first two years and for two hours during the last two years of the gymnasium.

In the special language gymnasium, in addition to the required Russian classes of three hours a week, the number of hours for English as a second foreign language would be 5.5 hours in the first year, followed by six hours for the next two years, and five hours during the last year, or an annual average of 5.6 hours a week for the gymnasium years covering the 14-18 age range.

Two specialized language schools, experimental in nature, provide even more intensive foreign language training for the students. There students at the gymnasium level have 12 hours of English per week as well as English and American literature.

Every university in Hungary requires continuous study of two foreign languages during the first two years in professional schools. Russian is required and a second language is elective. English, German and French are chosen most frequently. Language classes meet two hours a week, and students are required to pass an examination in both Russian and the elective foreign language at the end of the second year. This applies not only to the students enrolled in the humanities, but also to those registered at the science, medical and technical universities.

Among the foreign languages taught in Hungary, English enjoys first place as the most frequently elected foreign language among students from age 10 through 20. This includes the elementary, gymnasium, university and college levels. Russian, of course, is a required language for all students in this same age range.

Three Hungarian universities have English departments or institutes. However, none of the eight faculty members in the departments are native English speakers. English is an acquired tongue for all of them.

It might be of interest to note that a bilingual (English and German) daily newspaper, the *Daily News*, is published in Budapest. Students of all ages, as well as adults, buy the paper regularly. The press run is 10,000 copies a day, but much of this, to be

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ENCOURAGING NEWS FROM DENMARK

After reading through a number of letters from various countries which stressed deficiencies in the field of English teaching, it is pleasant to be able to quote from this letter from Copenhagen:

"Denmark puts special stress on English teaching and the general currency of English here is exceptional. English has been the second foreign language in the Danish schools since the end of World War II, when it displaced German. All Danish students begin English studies at about the age of ten, so a rudimentary knowledge of the language at least is universal here. At the higher schools, English is almost always a required language for substantive reading. Most students at the senior *gymnasium* level (the eleventh and twelfth year of education) could be called fluent in the language for general purposes.

"I should say that one of the remarkable things about English teaching here is the exceptional maintenance of quality. Although Danes are taught English by other Danes, the standard approaches native excellence."

The writer adds that he was absent from Denmark between the early 1950's and 1967, and on his return discovered that the depth and breadth of English comprehension had increased markedly in that time. He observes that "though there has been an increased interest in both French and Russian in recent years, it does not seem likely that either of those languages, or German, will ever approach the popularity and importance of English here."

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sure, is sent abroad. In the contemporary Hungarian Journal, *Idegen Nyelvek Tanitása* (Teaching Foreign Languages) articles on English appear in nearly every issue.

The Educational Society for Humanities and Society, a nation-wide association for the dissemination of knowledge in Hungary, offers language courses and other subjects through its branch organizations. English language courses are particularly popular. Dozens of these are offered in Budapest and in many other cities. Highly developed, modern methods of language instruction are used, and both children and adults attend in large numbers.

In concluding, we might refer to an article published in 1965 by László Országh, now director emeritus of the English Institute in Debrecen, in which he spelled out a broad program for American studies in Hungary. Little of Országh's program has been carried out. Implementation of such a program would require a two-way street of contacts between America and Hungary, and cooperation and encouragement at official government levels in Hungary and in the United States.

AN ANNIVERSARY FOR "SPECIAL ENGLISH"

Much as the BBC speaks for Britain abroad, so does the Voice of America, the global radio network of the U.S. Information Agency, speak for the United States.

(The U.S. Information Agency, or U.S.I.A., becomes U.S.I.S., or United States Information Service, when it goes overseas. The two are identical, and the reasons for the difference in nomenclature are largely technical. It is more important to note that since 1953 USIA, or USIS, has been an independent agency reporting directly to the President, but taking policy guidance from the Department of State).

The Voice of America, originally located in New York, was transferred in 1954 to Washington. Today it broadcasts in 36 languages, with about 20 other languages in reserve for emergencies. Its broadcasts in English are world-wide, and of particular interest is a special form of English broadcasting, which—aptly enough—is called "Special English," and of whose existence the average American is probably unaware.

"Special English" differs from normal English both in speed of delivery and vocabulary. The ordinary news broadcaster whom you hear in your homes speaks at a rate of 15 to 19 lines a minute. On regular Voice of America programs this is reduced to about 12 lines a minute. And in "Special English" broadcasts not only is the rate cut down to approximately nine lines a minute, but the vocabulary is restricted to a special list of 1,200 words. Thus the overseas listener who is struggling to improve his English finds a convenient stepping stone toward increased comprehension. This year (1969) "Special English," which has successfully broadcast news, short stories, and other features, celebrates its tenth anniversary—which is one reason for its inclusion in this newsletter.

A BRIEF WORD FROM CAMEROON

CAMEROON, a federal republic of west equatorial Africa on the Gulf of Guinea, is of special interest in that it represents a federation of the former British Cameroons (Anglophone) and the French Cameroons (Francophone), thus combining both English-speaking and French-speaking populations.

A source from that country has this to record:

"The study of English is compulsory in all secondary schools in East (Francophone) Cameroon and among the teachers are a considerable number of British and American volunteers. In West Cameroon, the language of instruction is English. There are also two bilingual schools in Cameroon where instruction is nominally given in both English and French. . . . I believe one can say that there is a trend toward generalization of English as a second language in East Cameroon and as a first language in West Cameroon."